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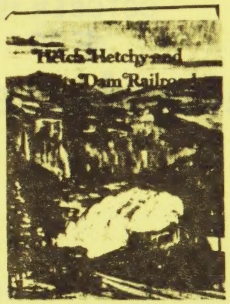
RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 20
SECOND ISSUE OF
OCTOBER 1973
#70

PRESIDENT OF AMTRAK IS SERIOUSLY ILL

It was learned just after our last issue went to press that Roger Lewis, President of Amtrak, had been hospitalized Sept. 25, two days before the Amtrak board meeting reported on earlier, with a heart condition. Shortly thereafter Mr. Lewis underwent open heart surgery, and has remained hospitalized for recovery. In his absence from Amtrak, Mr. Lewis's duties are taken over by his assistant, J. Richard Tomlinson.



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RAIL TRAVEL WILL COST MORE

Fare increases on Amtrak trains are in the offing. Effective November 16, there will be fare increases on several routes, running about 10%. These include, at latest information, Montreal-Washington, Montreal and Boston-Florida, Chicago-Milwaukee, and Seattle-Los Angeles. In addition, the N.Y. & Washington-Chicago route will see a similar increase, but only for travelers to intermediate stations between "end-points." The special Boston-N.Y. corridor coach fare of $9.90 will be upped to $11. Metroliner fares remain unchanged except for Metro coach fares to intermediate stations.

Also effective Nov. 16 is a family plan change many riders will find costly: the family fare will be effective only on trips for which the one-way coach fare is $20 or more, not $7 as at present. On tri-weekly trains, the family plan will apply every day the train runs, not just Monday-Thursday as at present. This change affects the SUNSET, INTER-AMERICAN, and the portion of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA route west of Minneapolis.

Another fare increase will be effective next summer, about June 9. This will be an additional 20% increase on the following routes: Chicago-Laredo, Chicago-Los Angeles, Chicago-San Francisco, Chicago-Seattle, New Orleans-Los Angeles, and Vancouver-San Diego. This change will be effective only for the heavy summer season of 1974, and will drop back 10% in the fall of next year, about September 8. Thus in fall, 1974, the above routes will be 20% higher than at present.

To exemplify these long-distance route increases, passengers on the COAST STARLIGHT will shortly be paying 10% more for their train travel (between Los Angeles and San Francisco that means a jump from $18.50 to about $20.35). Next summer they will pay another 20% higher fare ($24.42 L.A.-S.F.), and next fall a 10% lower fare ($21.98 L.A.-S.F.).

ON THE COVER:

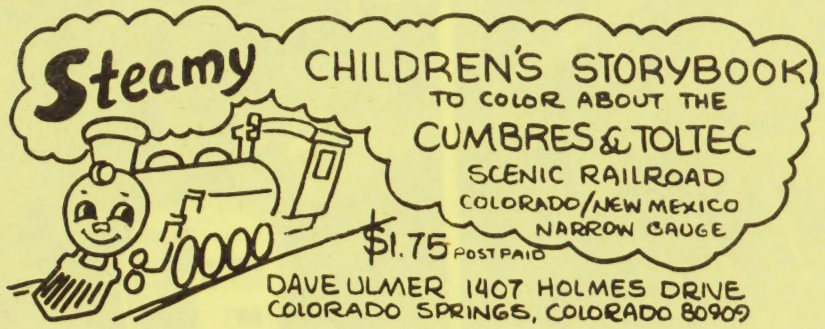
Another beautiful shot by Ken Maylath that further establishes his photographic reputation. Amtrak's Metroliner 119, in Penn Central paint, was seen last May 12 heading for Washington after its 3:30pm New York departure. The train was caught at Middle River, Maryland, from a highway overpass. This particular Metroliner remains unchanged in Amtrak's new Oct. 28 schedule, but a 15th daily Metroliner is added northbound in the big restructuring of Northeast service detailed last issue

THE AMTRAK IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1973

The Senate and the House have now both passed the Amtrak funding bill for the present fiscal year, and the resulting bill has emerged from the joint compromise committee and been sent to President Nixon for his signature. If it is not vetoed by Nov. 5, the bill automatically becomes law. It provides $107.3 million for Amtrak plus $47 million withheld by the Administration last year, this latter to pay for new services including the St. Louis-Laredo train and the San Joaquin Valley service in California. Administration objection to the terms of the bill may come not on the grounds of the money involved, but on the fact that it takes some of the overseeing power away from the administration and gives it to Congress. Amtrak is required to present proposed budgets to Congress at the same time it submits them to the Dept. of Transportation. The bill would increase consumer representation on Amtrak's Board of Directors and prohibit any conflict of interest in Board members. Federal loan guarantees available to Amtrak are raised from $200 to $500 million. Passenger trains would have priority over freight trains on the nation's tracks, according to the terms of the new law. Any increase in payments to railroads for running trains must be tied to quality of service; this would deny Penn Central the $40 million extra it is seeking from Amtrak. Other provisions of the bill give Amtrak the right of eminent domain to acquire right-of-way, land, or other property required for tracks and station facilities; require Amtrak to design facilities so that handicapped and elderly people have suitable access to them; remove the requirement that railroads provide employees for Amtrak; allow Amtrak to run auto-ferry service and for competitors to do likewise; require Amtrak to operate service within the basic system until July 1, 1974 and to initiate at least one experimental route each year, designated by the Transportation Secretary.

RE-ROUTING OF TEXAS CHIEF APPROVED BY ARBITRATION PANEL

The National Arbitration Panel late in October finally decided that the Chicago-Houston TEXAS CHIEF should run thru Dallas over SP tracks. A schedule of no longer than 6 hours Dallas-Houston is required. SP and Amtrak must meet and decide what track upgrading is needed, and each share equally its cost.



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Scheduled mailing date for this issue: October 31, 1973.

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE DATA RELEASED

Amtrak on October 18 released its on-time performance data for August and September. Overall performance went up appreciably in September compared to August: for Metroliners, on-time percent went from 51.4 to 72.6; Turbotrains went from 25.6 to 49.3; short-distance conventional trains overall went from 63.1 to 70.8; long-distance trains jumped from 17.5 to 35.1 per cent. Lumping all trains together, August saw 51.4% on time, while September had 63.4%.

Fiscal year 1973 financial data for Amtrak routes were mentioned last issue. From these we have calculated train operating revenues as a per cent of operating costs (with facilities, administration, and avoidable costs not included, since these were not given for all routes in Amtrak's tables). These give a rough guide to how various routes are doing money-wise; figures of 1.00 or greater generally indicate routes showing a profit or close to it. (Route designations are those given by Amtrak.)

1.28	Northeast Corridor	.73	Chic.-New Orleans	.50	Chicago-Milwaukee
1.27	Chicago-Quincy	.71	L.A.-San Diego	.50	Chicago-Detroit
.91	Chicago-St. Louis	.70	L.A.-New Orleans	.44	Seattle-Portland
.86	Chicago-L.A.	.68	New York-Buffalo	.42	Laredo
.83	Seattle-San Diego	.66	Chicago-Seattle	.40	NY/Wash.-Kansas City
.80	Boston-Florida	.64	NY/Wash.-Chicago	.39	Cincinnati-Washington
.79	Chicago-San Fran.	.60	Chicago-Florida	.36	Vancouver
.79	Montreal	.54	Southern Montana	.28	Chicago-Cincinnati
.75	Chic.-Carbondale	.52	Chicago-Houston	.15	Washington-Cumberland

mixed train of thoughts

THE SUPER CHIEF on October 14 took the old SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF route via Amarillo, texas, due to high rain water in Kansas and the derailment of 17 cars of a 92-car Santa Fe freight train at about 6pm that date two miles east of Lamar, Colorado. The TEXAS CHIEF also was seen arriving in Chicago at 11pm on Oct. 12, having been re-routed via Tulsa, Oklahoma, apparently also due to flooding..... SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD was authorized by the Calif. Public Utilities Commission Oct. 16 to raise its commute fares 6% with 5 days' notice, then another 2% next Jan. 1..... NEW TROLLEY BUSES may be purchased jointly by 5 transit systems to reduce costs (by standardizing design, as was done with the Boston and San Francisco streetcars that are forthcoming). The agencies are Philadelphia's Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (110 vehicles), Boston's Mass. Bay Transport. Authority (50), Seattle (50), Dayton (25), and San Francisco Muni. Railway (335). Negotiations are underway with the Federal agency UMTA regarding the plan..... PENN CENTRAL COMMUTER train in the Bronx jumped the tracks and hit a 30-foot steel tower Oct. 10. The tower collapsed, and so did a 65-foot bridge holding signal lights overhead; this fell onto two cars, crushing the roof of one. Only one person was slightly injured. A massive commuter tieup ensued, with 3 of the 4 tracks into Manhattan on the Harlem and New Haven Division line from Westchester and Connecticut blocked. Some 40,000 commuters were said to be delayed by the crash..... UNIVERSAL STUDIOS WAS observed by reader John W. Baxter filming part of an episode of the ABC-TV show "Toma" at Los Angeles Union Station Sept. 5. Three refurbished coaches were spotted on track 6 as the setting for several scenes, and the station interior appeared in others. A sign reading "To Trains" was installed between the restroom entrances, with the ladies' room marked "Track 1" and the men's room "2." A guard was present to prevent untoward results.....

(continued on page 17)

TO THE SOUTHLAND IN STYLE

by Glenn Lee

It used to be that the term "Southland" referred to that portion of California south of the Tehachapi Mountains. With the continuous northward expansion of the Angelenian plasticulture, however, many residents of the Great Northwest now feel that the Southland begins at the 42nd parallel (Oregon line). It is thus with a slight bit of unease that one contemplates a trip south from the Puget Sound Country.

However, I was greatly anticipating the trip because: 1) it would be by Amtrak's COAST STARLIGHT; and 2) it would take me to Davis, a university city in, but often not of, California.

Pronounced travelworthy by my doctor following a recent illness, I boarded the STARLIGHT at Seattle's King St. station on a bright and cheery day. The train consisted of 14 cars, including 6 coaches and 3 sleepers, and altho not packed, was well filled.

Remembering a round trip on the STARLIGHT a year before, in the tri-weekly days, I headed straight for the dining car. If you want a noon meal, speed is a must, as the diner fills fast out of Seattle, and lines form by the time the train reaches Tacoma.

The diner on the STARLIGHT was beautiful. A number of passengers entered with "Oh, my!" as their reaction, somewhat akin to fraternity members returning after a summer to find the alumni have redone a part of the house. A man across the aisle was busy telling a friendly woman that he had not traveled on a train since World War II and this looked pretty nice to him. The food was good, and offered a reasonable selection.

As we cruised south, we lost only a few minutes of time due to trackwork on BN rail between Seattle and Tacoma, but were out of Centralia, the halfway point to Portland, on time. Fall colors were bright and cheery as we rolled thru a beautiful, warm Indian-summer afternoon.

After lunch I had a chance to prowl around the train, and found it looking better than ever. To a frequent "commuter" on the Coast route during the "bad old" SP days, today's STARLIGHT is a real treat. But there are still some problems to be overcome, as I soon found out.

My sleeping car was 2757 "Palm Star," and was beautifully redone. After lunch, I had an opportunity to use the public toilet in "Palm Star." When a man stands to use this facility, he will find, much to his surprise, that both the toilet seat and toilet cover will come down because of train motion. This is upsetting to the hygienists around, and would probably be the source of much w.c. humor in England. Later, I found that the toilet cover and seat in my roomette would do the same thing.

"Palm Star" has been very tastefully redone, and my roomette was as pleasant as could be. But I had trouble with the door. Each minor acceleration would pull the door open full; and each minor brake application would close the door. Apparently the rollers on the door were not replaced. So I gave up and locked myself in. The new roomette curtain was attractive, also; but it was pleated in such a way that the major fold curved into the door jam, preventing closure for locking unless one used a pencil or his finger to push the pleat back. A minor problem for a younger person; but no doubt this will be a source of trouble to an elderly person traveling by roomette.

"Palm Star" remained reasonably cool into Portland, despite a bright and warm sun. Portland arrival was on time, and here our three BN diesel units (2 Es and one F) were replaced by two SP SDP-45s--which emphasized the curse of steam-ejector air conditioning. Steam pressure drops, of course, when the locomotives are changed, and when this happens, the air conditioning stops. When the train pulled out of Portland, "Palm Star's" a.c. just wasn't working well, and the car remained warm into Eugene, where sunset and cooler weather helped restore temperatures to normal.

Departure from Portland was on time, and I thought I was finally going to have one beautiful, well-run, on-time trip to California. But leaving Eugene, as a comic would say, the thit plockened.

First minor discord note took place as I moved forward to the dining car. At milepost 602 near Lookout Point Dam, the STARLIGHT took siding for a northbound freight. Shortly after that I had my first encounter with an "Amtrak Steward."

Altho dining car reservations are used on other Amtrak trains such as the EMPIRE BUILDER, not so on the STARLIGHT. When I asked the steward for a seat for one, he asked my name. I replied: "Lee" and he said: "Fine, now go on into the lounge and I'll call you." At this, about one third of the diner seats were empty.

"But I don't want to go to the lounge car. Just tell me when to come back," I said.

"You have to go to the lounge car, 'cause I don't know when we'll be ready for you," replied the steward.

"Guess!" I said, feeling the blood of anger rushing to my forehead.

"Oh, about five minutes, I'd say," said the steward, but as I turned to walk from the diner he yelled after me: "BUT I'M LYING!" At that point I wanted to pick him up by the collar and throw him from the train, as any first-class passenger or businessman might, but retreated to my roomette in silence.

About one-half hour later, as we roared thru Oakridge, foot of the big climb to Cascade Summit, I ventured to the diner once again. This time, a complete change. An experienced waiter, who must have seen the previous confrontation, ushered me to a seat, pushed a menu at me, and served me swiftly and with great competence. I did not see the steward again.

About 7:40pm, hopes for an on-time trip to California were dashed. As we hit Pryor, first siding on the grade out of Oakridge, we came to a complete halt, and remained motionless for over 90 minutes. Ahead of us, on a freight which was going into the siding for the uphill STARLIGHT, a mainpin snapped on a tank car; and a set of trucks was no longer connected to the tank. The trucks stayed on the track but the air brakes went into emergency as the tank car slid along the freed wheel assembly.

Fortunately, the mainpin snapped after the tank had entered the siding. But unfortunately, while the rear of the freight blocked the main line.

It took about an hour for crews of both trains, the dispatcher and others to decide what to do. One of SP's traveling Amtrak troubleshooters was on the rear platform, and his radio was put to good use, aiding the rear brakeman in preparing for the action to come.

High above us on "the hill," another downbound freight took a siding near Wicopee, dropped his freight, and came down light-engine to grab on to the rear of the freight blocking the main line. Then the STARLIGHT backed down 2-3 miles below the siding and waited while the forward part of the disabled freight pulled thru the siding, and then reversed to couple to the rear of the train. The movement was done so as to keep a few "good" cars on either side of the disabled tank car to keep it in place.

Once the freight was reassembled, the STARLIGHT pulled uphill again, this time into Pryor siding, to let the reassembled freight by. At this time, the light units were moving back uphill ahead of the STARLIGHT. By 9:45pm, more than two hours late, the STARLIGHT backed out of the Pryor siding after the freight had cleared, and then stopped while the engines reversed. Then, a very frightening incident.

"KAH-RACK" went the cars with an enormous forward jolt. I felt, along with other passengers, that the STARLIGHT had been struck by another train. I'd been standing on the forward vestibule of 2213 "Indian Flute," and noted that "Flute's" front door had been pulled almost completely open.

"G-d D-mn, he's like to tear us in two," said the brakeman with astonishment.

"Hooo-Boy" said the SP troubleshooter, "that was <u>really</u> a jolt."

My porter came back to the platform wide-eyed, but didn't say anything. "Whiplash," I said. "Yeaaaah" he said slowly, as he returned to the car.

The SP troubleshooter said somebody would probably hear about that. "Amtrak's getting to be like any other railroad now--everybody checking on everybody else." And looking at his watch, he said: "And tonight, of all nights. First time we've been on time in weeks."

I had been a little upset by the earthquake-like suddenness of the jolt, but was reassured as we picked up speed and moved steadily up the grade. I gazed around the roomette again, hoping it wouldn't fall

New Amtrak publicity photo shows the COAST DAYLIGHT/STARLIGHT heading north along the scenic coastline near Gaviota, California, north of Santa Barbara.

apart on me. In the upper front right I noted a box once used in SUPER CHIEF service. It had five buttons. Four were marked. They were for public address system, radio, popular music, and classical music. The fifth, I thought, would probably be the one we'd soon push to hear an inspirational recorded message from Roger Lewis.

I awoke suddenly at 5:13am. Once more the STARLIGHT was in a siding. Many years of Shasta route commuting and a good sense of geography told me we were at Silverthorne, first siding north of Redding. It was pitch dark, and a few minutes later, roaring out of the blackness came No. 378, the northbound Pacific Coast Expediter piggyback train. Insult to injury, I thought, waiting for the day and hour the 1973 Amtrak Improvement Bill becomes law so things like this would no longer be legal.

We were out of Redding at 5:25am, or one hour, 47 minutes late.

Finally, after stopping at Gerber (not in the Amtrak timetable), I dressed and went to the dining car. Track was reasonably good down the Sacramento Valley, but not quite as smooth as it had been in the Cascades last evening.

Because of our lateness, I had the great pleasure of watching the sun rise thru the Sutter Buttes. The valley is a beautiful place, especially so in early morning. No big cities. Lots of lush farms and nearby hills of the Coast Range. From the Trinity Alps and the Yolla Bollies on the north to Mt. Vaca on the south, a quiet, protected, serene place. Much fun to "rediscover" it by train again.

Across from me at breakfast was a pleasant woman in her 60s, from Enid, Oklahoma. She had gone to Chicago to take the EMPIRE BUILDER to Pasco, Washington, there to be met by relatives from La Grande, Oregon (had the CITY OF PORTLAND been running, she would have been very happy). She was to transfer at Los Angeles that evening to the SUPER CHIEF to return via Newton, Kansas. She told me how much she hated buses. And I refrained from telling her that if she wanted to get the SUPER that evening in L.A., she'd be making a fast bus trip down super-boring interstate 5 from Oakland, as we were still quite late.

Arrival in Davis was 7:58am, or 1 hr 28 min late. Nothing has changed at the Davis station. The "jungle" is as lush as in 1969, when a hobo died there and his body went undiscovered for a week. Just the waiting room has been changed. It has been reduced in size by about one half, with much seating and the baggage lockers removed, so that the crews can have their own "waiting room."

I watched the STARLIGHT pull out onto the main line at Davis, and then, with much pleasurable anticipation, slipped once again (if only for a few days) into the warm, rich, engrossing and rewarding culture of that student community.

OUT EAST ON THE OVERLAND TRAIN

by Glenn Lee

Horace Greeley, Lucius Beebe and Richard Reihardt, author of "Out West on the Overland Train," would probably disagree, but I think it's a lot more fun, and emotionally more satisfying to ride the Overland Route eastward from California. The climb east from Sacramento is more than 7000 feet in a single encounter with the Sierra, and there aren't many places around where you can climb mountains like that by rail.

"Something is lost behind the mountains. Go and find it," said a poet. Today, perhaps that something is the peace and quiet of a still-empty Nevada, a welcome relief from urban congestion. It is even more appealing when contrasted with today's California: deadending multiversities, wacky politicians, zany citizens, lurid cults, and a high percentage of population afflicted to some extent with Culture Overload.

It was a cool, clear and somewhat windy day when a friend drove me to the Sacramento SP station from Davis. It's a monumental structure, and still functioning, but there are no signs to guide the traveler. The rail passenger homes in on instinct. A courteous staff checked my baggage and gave directions.

During my stay in Davis, the eastbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR had been "on time" but today timekeeping had lagged. It seems difficult to lose 30 minutes of time on a 95-minute run from Oakland, but the SFZ arrived in Sacramento 11:35am. I held tickets for a roomette in car 0636, the last sleeper on the train. Only car 0636 today was a 4-4-2 all-room sleeping car from the old CASCADE run, SP 9120. I feared the worst as I boarded, but an extremely courteous and efficient porter checked a special list from the Amtrak reservation department, and assigned me to bedroom 1. Quite a thrill. I had never traveled alone by bedroom before, and my part Scot ancestry had once driven me to hitching a ride from California north at Christmas when all there was left on the CASCADE was bedrooms.

Due out at 11:20am, SFZ finally got underway 31 minutes late, and soon we were rolling thru suburban sprawl to Antelope and the Roseville Yards, scene of last spring's ammunition train explosion. Plenty of evidence was still visible at trackside of the "bombing."

Leaving Roseville, we passed No. 5, the westbound SFZ, powered by two new Amtrak SDP-40F "500-series" diesels pulling 12 cars (see photo in last issue).

Then the climb toward Donner began. Having traveled both the WP Feather River Route and the SP Donner Route, my favors have rested with the WP; but on a beautiful afternoon, sitting on the top level of the SP-style dome car, I began to change my mind. The great gorge of the American River from Cape Horn was awesome, and the quality of the scenery continued to mount thru the afternoon. Unfortunately, many passengers missed the highlights because of lack of a train public address system.

"The" best seat in the house is the single seat in a comfortable alcove just above the lower lounge. Amtrak's designers have apparently taken out seats here, effectively isolating anyone taking up residence. I spent most of the afternoon in this excellent viewing spot.

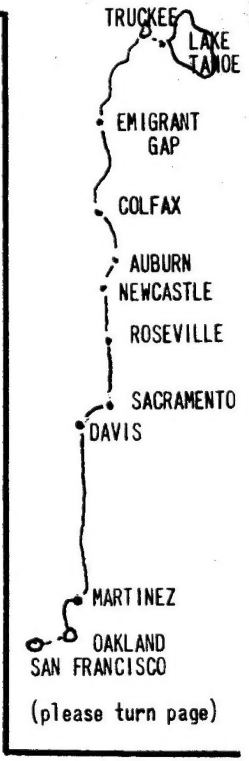
At 2:23pm we rolled thru Emigrant Gap, and even the blase Reno-bound crowd began "Uuuhing" and "Aaahing" as we moved into the high country along the Yuba River. After passing thru the eastbound tunnel at Norden, the dome car patrons became fairly animated, exclaiming over Donner Lake. The very bright day at 7000 feet, even under tinted dome windows, was a bit much, and I retreated to my bedroom for the trip around Stanford Curve, thru Truckee and into Reno.

Once again I thought of the great 38-mile tunnel proposed in the early 1920s for the Donner line, before the Central Pacific case was settled, and when the Harriman regime had plenty of

(continued on page 13)

Tahoe by Train

SINCE OCTOBER 28, 1973 A WAY EXISTS TO REACH THE HUGE LAKE TAHOE PLAYLAND OF CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA BY RAIL. OUR CORRESPONDENT WAS THERE FOR THE BIG EVENT WHEN THE SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR BEGAN HAULING TRAVELERS TO TRUCKEE.



AMTRAK FALLS BACK TO SPRING FORWARD

Observing the annual fall turning back of the clocks to Standard Time October 28, Amtrak went onto its new fall schedules, while long-distance trains slowed up so as to avoid becoming an hour early on their schedules that day. (Parenthetically, serious talk was emerging about maintaining Daylight Savings Time all year long as an energy-saving device in this time of fuel shortages.)

Most of the Eastern timetable changes were reported here last issue. In addition, Amtrak announced that it is "significantly upgrading" the MERCHANTS LIMITED, SOUTHERN CRESCENT, and SENATOR, and all will have speciality cars for better food service, and bar and parlor cars. Amtrak regards these trains as supplements to the Metroliners, especially for businessmen unable to get reservations on those popular high-speed trains. "As summer traffic pressures have reduced," Amtrak announced in a press releast, they can now run some refurbished cars on all Boston-Washington trains and most other trains in that corridor.

The MONTREALER and WASHINGTONIAN, to allow better arrival times at Vermont and New Hampshire ski areas, will leave Washington one hour earlier northbound and Montreal one hour 15 minutes earlier southbound, and extra equipment will be added on weekends for skiers.

The CHAMPION becomes a N.Y.-St. Petersburg train via Orlando, Florida, home of Walt Disney World. It will again run on the traditional schedule, leaving N.Y. at 3:50pm, 2 hours earlier than before. Northbound, it leaves St. Petersburg at 10:30am, 3 hours earlier, to provide better schedules to the Carolinas as well as to Disney World.

(please turn page)

Schedules remain the same on the Empire Service (NY.-Albany-Buffalo), but all of the cars have been renovated, Amtrak said, and ex-SCL observation cars which had been used on the West Coast are already being used on trains 71 and 78, the trains connecting with the RDC cars from Buffalo to Toronto. The refurbished coaches which have been gradually appearing are ex-NYC long distance coaches from the late 1940s.

Unable to make reliable connections southbound with the SUPER CHIEF and SUNSET LIMITED because of poor timekeeping, Amtrak has changed the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL and the COAST STARLIGHT/DAYLIGHT to leave 30 minutes earlier from all points southbound.

THE FLORIDIAN will be upgraded with the December 14 winter schedule, and will carry two dome coaches, a Disco Pub lounge car, a full diner, and will be powered by rebuilt Amtrak E units. It is to have a full package of activities similar to other Florida trains, with a Passenger Service Representative, a Train Service

(continued on page 12)

A band from Sacramento played "California Here I Come" and "Happy Days Are Here Again." (See left photo.)

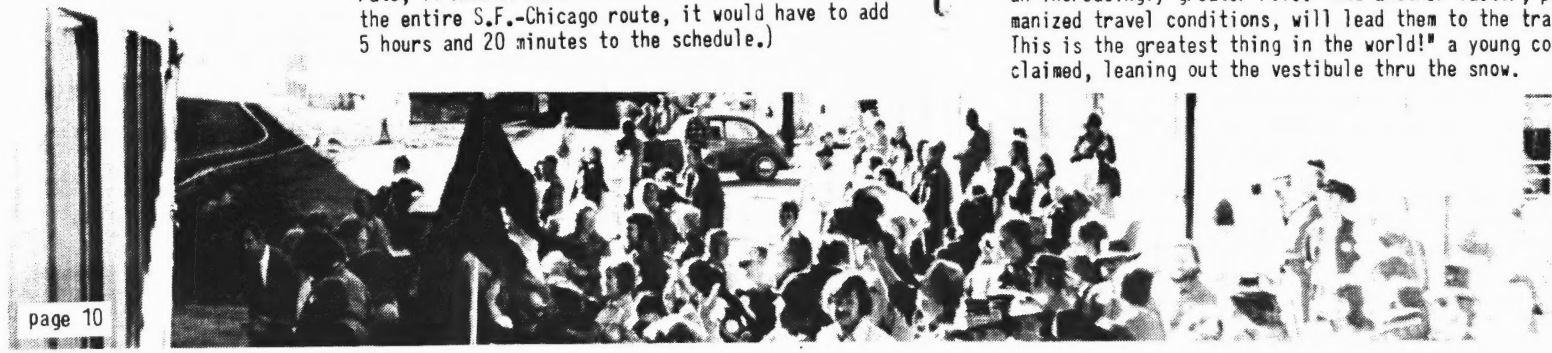
One of the longest-burning environmental debates in California has been the potential destruction of Lake Tahoe by the uncontrolled introduction of automobile-spawned traffic. A decade ago state highway engineers came up with a scheme to build a freeway around much of the lake and a bridge across picturesque Emerald Bay. The uproar over such a plan probably brought the issue of Lake Tahoe ecology to a head, and thus far freeway proponents have been held at bay. But the completion of interstate highway 80 from San Francisco pours ever-increasing amounts of automobiles into the fragile and lovely Tahoe basin. With the Amtrak takeover 2½ years ago, the mediocre train service to the area operated by Southern Pacific was discontinued. But what Amtrak takes away, Amtrak sometimes restores. And so this October 28 saw a new stop initiated on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR route at Truckee, gateway to the Tahoe region.

As with other changes Amtrak has tried to make with SP service, the railroad balked and dragged its feet. The station was in bad repair, it was claimed. It wasn't. A new coat of paint brought it back to life. The trains freeze to the tracks if they stop there in the winter, SP claimed. But SP had stopped them there for years. Amtrak, after months of delay around such a simple request, finally got its way; but SP demanded--and got--the absurd agreement that the schedule of the train, already highly padded, be lengthened by 10 minutes to make the brief passenger stop. (At that rate, if Amtrak were to reinstate all the stops on the entire S.F.-Chicago route, it would have to add 5 hours and 20 minutes to the schedule.)

Truckee, tho a small town, is an important highway junction point and the major maintenance center for the heavy SP freight traffic moving over Donner Summit to the west. At an elevation of 5800 feet, sharply downgrade from the over-7000 mark at the summit of the Sierra pass, Truckee averages 194 inches of snowfall yearly. On this beautiful autumn Sunday there were a few patches of snow lingering on shadowy hillsides, remnants of a recent storm. As the first eastbound ZEPHYR to make the stop steadily climbed Donner, passengers were excited by the increasingly white areas around the train, and marveled at the brilliance of golden autumn leaves among the evergreens under a bright blue sky.

Precisely at the scheduled 2:35 the big machine--as luck would have it, minus its usual dome today--came to a halt in the Sierra town. A goodly crowd had gathered for the occasion, and a band was playing (see adjoining photos) to welcome in the first No. 6 (train 5 at 8:22am had actually made the first stop there, but this was the run the crowd was prepared to witness). The little station was decorated with Metroliner posters and had a rack of brochures, including the first S.F. ZEPHYR route brochures we've seen. A line of people were asking the personable young agent Vance Fowler, about fares to San Francisco ($11.00). Kids tossed Amtrak balloons about. Many onlookers waved cowboy hats, having donned colorful western garb for the occasion. After a brief stop, the train pulled out and the crowd dispersed.

It was a small beginning, but quite possibly an important occasion in a long line of historic events on the Overland Route. In this age of energy conservation and environmental protection, public transportation such as this will play an increasingly greater role. And another factor, people's desire for more humanized travel conditions, will lead them to the train. "Oh, man! This is the greatest thing in the world!" a young couple had exclaimed, leaning out the vestibule thru the snow.



TRUCKEE-TAHOE BUS SCHEDULE

4:50p lv Truckee
5:10p lv Squaw Valley
5:25p lv Tahoe City
5:40p lv Kings Beach
5:45p lv Crystal Bay
5:50p lv Incline Village
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(continued from page 9)

Director, and complimentary blankets for coach passengers and free continental breakfasts for first class riders. The auto-ferry service on the train will begin at an unspecified date, probably late winter. Autos will be carried between Indianapolis and the Orlando area, probably using auto-rack cars with added sides and roof.

The other four Florida trains, the CHAMPION, SILVER STAR, SILVER METEOR, and VACATIONER, with the Dec. 14 changeover, will all feature train hostesses, hospitality hours and champagne punch, complimentary wake-up coffee and orange juice, evening entertainment hours, and complimentary morning and evening newspapers. All Florida trains will carry either two diners or a diner and tavern-lounge. The VACATIONER, running N.Y.-Miami beginning Dec. 14 for the winter season only, will carry a 48-seat diner and bar-lounge diner, plus a lounge car. It will use slumbercoaches, as will the CHAMPION and SILVER STAR. The METEOR and CHAMPION will carry thru cars to and from Boston, and the SILVER STAR will have thru service to and from Montreal in conjunction with the MONTREALER. The METEOR, STAR, and CHAMPION will continue their current schedules in winter. The "Week of Wheels" program, with a free rental car, will be available to passengers on all five Florida trains.

Urban-Suburban Transit

DENVER VOTERS APPROVED a $1.56 billion bond issue funded by a half-cent sales tax to improve mass transit in the mile-high city. The vote came in mid-September, and details of the planned system are now being disseminated. Over the next 18 months, stepone, a 60% increase in bus service, is to occur--adding 275 route miles to the bus system and buying 115 new vehicles. Private bus systems will also be acquired, and present facilties upgraded. Long-term plans are for a "personal rapid transit" system (PRT), with 98 miles of guideways with 800 box-like people movers running on them thru the Denver metropolitan region. A push-button system would allow riders to summon a PRT vehicle within two minutes. The vehicles would each hold 12 people and would run between express and local bus lines, putting 73% of the population within a quarter-mile of rapid transit facilities. Federal funding is wanted for the PRT project, and a pilot project will be completed initially. If it is successful, construction of the system could begin in three years, with completion planned for 1983. In other Denver news, the Rio Grande Railroad has offered its Denver-Littleton lines to the Rapid Transit District for testing of commuter trains. A D&RGW spokesman said that if such service is eventually made available to the public, the railroad's part in it would be expected to be on a cost-plus basis...

STATE OF MARYLAND is negotiating to take over operation of commuter service on the B&O Railroad's two lines, in an Amtrak-like arrangement. Negotiations for a third Penn Central line have apparently made little progress. The state would at first buy the passenger cars from the railroad, which runs trains in the suburbs of Baltimore and Washington. The state has $500,000 budgeted to offset revenue losses the first year, with a critical review to be made after that...

MAYOR OF PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania announced on October 12 a plan to upgrade public transit in that city by reviving rail commuter service and upgrading existing trolley lines. The $82 million plan is the fourth different transit plan to be suggested for the area.

(continued from page 8)

funds for capital improvements. This proposed bore was to have extended from Colfax east to about the west end of Donner Lake. It would have cut about 1200 feet from the summit, eliminated some 15-20 miles of distance, and banished snow problems forever. I once checked this proposed alignment on topog maps, and found that the grade would still be about 2%, because the line would be shortened so greatly.

About the only signs at the Sacramento depot are parking warnings that frighten away potential users.

If such a tunnel is built under government ownership, I thought, the existing Donner line should be kept intact as an alternate route, should derailment or geologic disturbance close the tunnel. But more important, any daylight passenger train over the Sierra should be routed via the existing Donner Pass route to give Americans a first-hand glimpse of what the American heritage has provided.

Departure from Reno was 44 minutes late. The schedule gives the SFZ 45 minutes to cover the 3 miles from Reno to Sparks, where the train is serviced.

At Sparks the "Reno coach" and a lead SP "F" unit were cut off, reducing our train to 3 ex-UP "E" units and 10 cars. Servicing at Sparks is fairly slow, apparently because of a small staff. But we got underway from Sparks 38 minutes down.

I returned to the dome car, No. 9371 (ex-SP 3602) and with the sun behind us now, noted that the word "Leak" had been written with crayon in two dome window panels which carried water between the glass panels. Water also occupied the space between the glass of the forward left dome window. Altho it's fascinating to watch the wave patterns thus formed, it means slow and poor car maintenance.

As we rolled across Nevada, I went to the diner, and found a courteous steward and crew, but a very poor menu. Selection was limited to four items--steak, roast beef, hamburger and chicken. This was definitely a menu from the "bad old" SP days during the big decline, and other passengers could be heard complaining. I'd suggest at least one fish item, and that old warhorse of CP Rail diners, a cheese omelet. The diner was not "hot" but was definitely running warm. The car was 8093, an ex-4800 series diner from UP, and has seen a lot of service. As I left the diner, I heard an attractive woman dressed in sportsclothes say to her friends: "Boy, is it warm in here."

I watched us roar thru Lovelock from the rear of SP 9120, and then turned in. We rolled pleasantly thru the dusk, picking up a little time, I thought--but incorrectly. Just west of Carlin, we stopped unexplainably for more than half an hour. By the time we left Elko we were 4 minutes short of 2 hours late. More than 2 hours later, east of the junction with WP, SFZ went into a siding and sat for what seemed like a long time. Finally, SFZ No. 5, some 3 hours from Ogden, came along, almost on time. Why, I thought, did our SFZ, 2 hours late, get stuck, and No. 5, perhaps on time, hold the main? Is someone running Amtrak with an eye to the "on-time" performance statistics? Since our train was already "late," was someone trying to save the day by keeping No. 5 on time, hoping, at 1:45am (Mountain time) that no one would be up noticing our No. 6?

Arrival at Ogden was 4:50am, 90 minutes down. Passengers at the Ogden station, arriving since midnight, were told until 3am that No. 6 was "on time." Then, at 3am, they were told it was one hour late. Obviously, with No.6 two hours late at Elko, it wasn't going to arrive Ogden on time, but prospective passengers were still getting SP's old "treat 'em like cattle" policy, with little or no effort expended on the basic courtesy of truthfulness.

Departure from Ogden was 5:18am, 93 minutes late. But things picked up steadily thru the morning on fast-fast UP track, and arrival at Rawlins saw No. 6 only 43 minutes down. Even tho the high altitude desert along the UP main line is a bore, riding No. 6 was fun. Passengers were having a good time. One woman told the brakeman how much she used to love riding the old UP CHALLENGER and the Coast train. "Oh, was the Coast train SP?" she asked in surprise.

The luncheon was once again late-SP spartan, and a definite improvement should be made in this menu, as well as in some stretches of UP track, which are getting a little bumpy.

Departure from Laramie was minus 30 minutes and the climb to Sherman was as fascinating as ever. A friendly brakeman announced sights to the passengers in the dome, and pointed out the Ames pyramid, built north of the present alignment adjacent to an earlier crossing of Sherman. We discussed the recent ABC suspense movie "Runaway" and heard about interesting runaways on Sherman as we pulled into Cheyenne 28 minutes down, shortly after passing SFZ No. 5 just west of town.

Departure from Cheyenne was 43 minutes late because of the long time spent servicing the diesels and coupling them to the rear of No. 6 for the backward ride to Denver.

A young lady in the dome complained about riding backward. "Lady, the UP has pulled the train backwards from Cheyenne to Denver for 90 years" said the brakeman, effectively halting the conversation.

Arrival at Denver was minus 17 minutes, giving an indication of how loose and padded the SFZ schedule is clear across the West. At Denver, those 3 ex-UP E units, so long in being serviced at Cheyenne, were cut from No. 6, and replaced by 3 ex-Q E units. Question: why not start the Q units at Cheyenne, or conversely, why service the ex-UP units at Cheyenne when they'll be cut off at Denver anyway?

Four cars were added at Denver, in effect the old DENVER ZEPHYR. From behind the bag-dorm, they included a 10-6 sleeper, two dome coaches, including "Silver Dome," America's first dome car, and an ex-GN "Ranch" car from the EMPIRE BUILDER. This meant that passengers in the DZ sleeper had to walk thru 8 cars to get to the diner. A suggestion: because Amtrack doesn't have enough SP domes to fill every SFZ consist, why not turn the SP domes at Denver, and replace them with either flattop lounges or ex-Q dome lounges at Denver? Then, in one cut of the train, where the SP dome had been, DZ cars would be added as follows: coaches, "Ranch" car, sleeper, flattop lounge. Sleeping car passengers would be near the diner, and the coffee shop car would still be with the coach section.

With friends, I watched the combined SFZ-DZ get out, some 25 minutes down. The fireman mockingly pointed at his watch to us, and made an expression registering disgust. I noted that the below-dome windows of "Silver Dome" had one-way "mirror" glass, something only recently acquired in the Amtrak refurbishing.

I had left SFZ at the right time. I had received a fine ride, and even an Amtrak shoe shine, my first. I retired with friends to talk trains long into the night, something almost as much fun as the train ride itself!

* * *

Coming next: Glenn continues his rail adventures on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR.

canadian news letter

RTN CAN NOW report the approximate mileages involved in the recently-announced agreement between Canadian National Railways and the British Columbia Railway to provide rail service to the Yukon. When completed, less than 400 miles of track would be needed to connect the Canadian system to the existing Alaska Railroad at Fairbanks. The BCR has committed itself to build approximately 175 miles of line north from Dease Lake to Lower Post, B.C., on the B.C.-Yukon border. From Lower Post, CN forces will construct about 300 miles of line west to Whitehorse, Y.T. A second stage will see CN build approximately 350 miles of route north from Whitehorse to Dawson City on the Yukon River. West from Dawson City, a number of feasible rail routes exist to Fairbanks, Alaska, northern terminus of the U.S.-owned Alaska Railroad. One possible route is southerly along the Alaska Highway corridor; a northerly route exists along the Yukon River. It is expected that the U.S. government would be responsible for constructing any Fairbanks-Dawson City line, which would probably not exceed 400 miles in length. (When will the first ALASKA ADVENTURE ZEPHYR operate, Chicago-Anchorage?)...

A PROPOSAL TO move freight in addition to people is being studied by the Toronto Transit Commission. This might be done in off-peak hours, with container goods loaded at any subway terminal for fast city delivery, according to TTC Commissioner Crawford Smyth...

BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT has announced construction of two new ferries for the Vancouver-Nanaimo service to directly compete with CP Rail's "Princess of Vancouver." The hulls of the new vessels will be identical, but the remainder of the 500-foot vessels will differ widely. One will be a regular 276-car ferry with room for about 1500 passengers. The other will be an open-deck vessel reserved for trucks and campers. Opposition parties claim an unsafe single-hull design is planned, but the B.C. Transport Minister says a regular double-hull plan is provided for...

CITING INCREASING LOSSES, CP Rail plans to cut its ferry service between Saint John, N.B., and Digby, N.S., from two to one round trip daily...

ONTARIO NORTHLAND IS ending its passenger train run to Timmins. Instead, the Timmins passenger station is to become a depot for Ontario Northland dial-a-bus service to carry passengers to Porquis Junction, the nearest passenger depot. The freight yards there will be shifted to a new industrial park...

COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM for the Greater Vancouver, B.C. region is recommended by a study made in Vancouver. Existing tracks would be used...

HISTORIC VAN HORNE mansion in Montreal has been torn down by wreckers, despite efforts by citizens' groups to save it. Van Horne was builder and later president of Canadian Pacific, and lived in the mansion from 1888 to 1899. It is said that Montreal historians were shocked to learn that CP refused to purchase the building when it was offered to them...

TIPS ON RIDING ON THE GEORGIA RAILROAD

The Atlanta-Augusta mixed train operated by Georgia RR, listed in Amtrak timetables, requires further explanation, says reader Timothy Colbert. One should call the dispatcher to find the actual departure time. Then find the Atlanta station, a pad of asphalt about 30 feet into the tracks at the corner of Hurt and Dekalb, across from the donut shop. Train can also be caught at Decatur station, but must be flagged down there. Equipment: 1 coach and a GP unit.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Amtrak's low-cost Carefree Coaches give you a chance to get up and go like you never did before. Now you can visit distant relatives or friends without tiring yourself out behind the wheel. Now you can take the family away on weekends without running into the kind of highway congestion that kills the fun. Now you can sightsee this spectacular land of ours with the picture-book views you only get from a train. It's not just your plans that are carefree. Your Amtrak trip itself is totally free of tension. You start off in your own deep reclining seat with a big picture window beside you. But, unlike the car, bus or plane, you're not confined to your seat. You can get up and stroll. Mingle with people in the lounge. Sit down to a good meal when you feel like it. And relax every mile of the way. Come ride an Amtrak Carefree Coach where the trip is part of the fun."

--From a current Amtrak newspaper ad

"You know, this is the first time I've ever ridden the train, but you notice something when you see all those people out there looking at you. At first, you think it's hostility, like you're delaying their lives or something. But then, you see that it's something else, almost like a reverence. There's something really awesome about a train."

--Amtrak passenger quoted in Long Beach, CA, Southland Sunday magazine of the Independent, Press-Telegram, August 26

"It's my judgment that the United States has, at last, turned the corner in its acceptance and usage of mass transit. To use a businessman's phrase--you're now clearly a 'growth industry.' By 1980, as your Association approaches its centennial year, the transit industry should be well on its way to again being the mainstay of urban transportation in our major cities."

--Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar in address to American Transit Association, Miami, Florida, October 15

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Mr. Worsey says he either blacked out or feel asleep while driving home from work. The result was a collision with an impact of 60 to 65 m.p.h."

--Wall Street Journal, September 20

(Don't you often feel asleep when you're driving?)

TRAVEL WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT THIS WINTER

Highway, air and rail travel will all be more expensive and harder to come by this winter. The growing fuel shortage accounts for most of this problem. Gasoline will be rising in price, and shortages could be expected when winter heating and power-generating needs strain the available supply of oil to its limit. Airlines have been announcing cutbacks in numbers of flights, in part because of a fare increase rejection by the CAB. Amtrak will be seeking higher fares this winter, as detailed on pages 2 and 3, and another decision of the rail passenger corporation, which has just become known, will reduce sharply the available number of passenger cars for winter travel. Amtrak's present plan is to limit consists to 14 cars, even during the peak Christmas season, except on the Florida trains. The reason given for this decision is that heating problems crop up in the winter, and long trains make the probability of steam lines malfunctioning greater. In trains that must traverse cold areas, the reasoning goes, 18 cars (the previous peak-season limit) are more likely to produce several cold cars than are 14 cars. This reduction in consist size on long-distance trains means a 25-30% decrease in available revenue space, thus putting a crunch on potential rail travelers at a time when both transportation problems and government policy are shifting people to the rail mode.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS (Continued from page 4)

PORTLAND, OREGON IS wrestling with problems of traffic and automobile-caused pollution, which is nothing novel for big cities; but a new solution is being proposed for the City of Roses by a dentist and rail fan, Dr. Lawrence Griffith. His ideas were explored in a long article, "Can yesterday's trolleys solve today's problemd?" in the Portland Oregonian's Northwest Magazine on Oct. 21. He advocates new trolleys, the LRT or light rail transit, with rubber tires, like those on order for San Francisco, Boston and Cleveland. Portland has some existing rights-of-way that could be used, he argues, such as the scenic river route between Portland and suburban Lake Oswego..... FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION recently released report on the investigation of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR derailment that happened at Inland, Nebraska on Sept. 4, 1972. They said it was caused by a broken rail. The track is patrolled daily except Sunday with a track motorcar, and over a Sunday without inspection the track gave away. The train was traveling at 75mph..... THOSE ON-AGAIN off-again names for new Midwestern trains, another chapter: Make these changes in our Amtrak map in the last issue--the Chicago-Dubuque train will not necessarily be called the LAND O' Corn (the contest we mentioned was not an official one, and Amtrak is undecided on the name); other proposed names: the WINNEBAGO and BLACK HAWK. The train will use rail diesel cars. Also, the Chicago-Springfield train is not the NEW SALEM..... ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF as of Nov. 1 will no longer provide dining car, sleeping car, train porter and parlor car service. Amtrak is taking over operational direction and control of these functions, as it has from two other railroads. All ICG employees in these positions will have an opportunity to obtain comparable employment with Amtrak, who are now arranging interviews.....

* * *

AMTRAK'S MONTREALER/WASHINGTONIAN was in danger of a head-on collision with an unmanned diesel engine that was started up by vandals who broke into the Burlington yards in Rutland, Vermont on Oct. 21 and set the unit going on the main line of the Vermont Railway at 5-10mph. It rolled 80 miles between Rutland and Essex Junction before police noticed it and jumped aboard to stop it..... THE NEWS MEDIA reported recently that B. F. Biaggini, president of SP, had DOT secretary Claude Brinegar as his personal guest for a weekend this summer at San Francisco's private, exclusive Bohemian Club encampment. Biaggini reportedly paid Brinegar's expenses personally. Brinegar said he saw no impropriety in the incident..... THE DEMONSTRATION RUN of the British train reported here in the First Sept. Issue proved to be not the APT, but the HST (High Speed Train). It set a new British railway speed record of 138mph, faster than the previous 126 set by the Mallard steam locomotive in 1936..... A BRITISH SCIENTIST is dreaming of transferring passengers between two moving trains to cut down running times. A "dynamic interchange" would be made on a ramp from a slower local train to a high-speed express that slow down to let the passengers board..... RALPH NADER WON a suit against Allegheny Airlines late this month. The carrier, which will appeal the ruling, is told to pay the consumer advocate $25,000 in punitive damages for overbooking a flight and then denying Nader passage even tho he held a reservation. Nader said he missed a lecture he was to give. The judge condemned the practice of overbooking..... OLD RAILROAD LINE used to run between San Jose and Santa Cruz, California. Now there's talk of reviving it as an alternative to widening freeways. The line was 31.9 miles long originally, and 22 miles of that is still owned by SP. The old SUNTAN SPECIAL used to run over the route. A formal hearing is being held Oct. 30 in San Jose. The Lockheed Missile and Space Co. is backing the plan, and wants to see the formation of a Santa Cruz-Santa Clara county transitdistrict with the authority to seek federal funds to revive the route..... THOS. COOK & SON, Ltd. were appointed last month as general sales agent for Amtrak for the United Kingdom; Japan Travel Bureau got a similar appointment for Japan..... A CONTROVERSIAL TRANSPORT study has recommended streetcars for Aspen, Colorado. Critics do not think they run well in snow.....

Amtrak's Turboliner made its inaugural run from Chicago to St. Louis on September 28 with some 200 aboard. Then on the following Monday, the French-built trains went into regular service on the route, with the first St. Louis arrival reportedly 21 minutes late.

The view from here is that the reaction in the Midwest to the new fast trains, at least from the press and from railfans, is weighted in the negative direction. As one observer noted, perhaps if Amtrak had placed the trains on a route such as the Chicago-Detroit line, where their service would be clearly superior to existing service, they would be appreated more. But in the Milwaukee-St. Louis corridor, the primary complaint about the novel trains is that the parlor and full dining facilities have disappeared with their advent. It's quite likely that Amtrak erred in ordering the trains without parlor cars--they are coach only. It's entirely reasonable that Amtrak may order their next ones with first class accommodations.

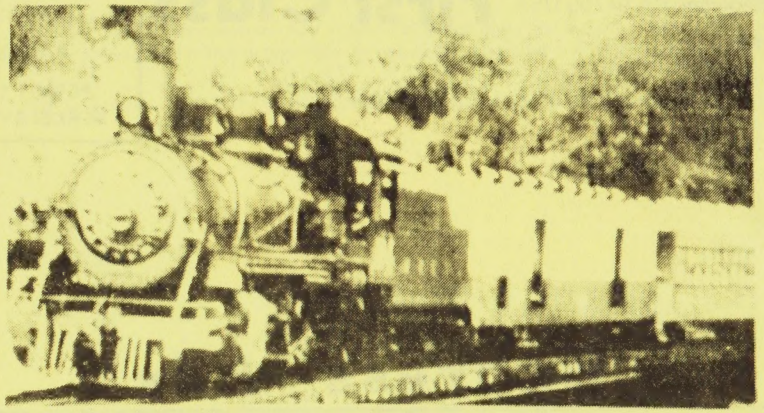
If Midwestern railfans appear disappointed with the trains, it is also known that Amtrak is disappointed with the response to its upgrading to date in the aforementioned corridor.

WON'T SOMEONE SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT AMTRAK'S NEW FRENCH "TURBOLINERS"?

The most significant positive statement about the trains, heard from a veteran train traveler, was that the trains are the smoothest and quietest he's ever ridden on American rails. That's saying quite a bit. The Chicago Tribune, tho, had a mixed bag of reportage on the Turbos. On October 1, the first day of revenue operation, the newspaper dispatched three reporters to ride three different modes --plane, auto, and Turboliner--from Chicago to St. Louis and to compare their trips, which were published in a prominent front-page article. In time, air won out: 3.15 hours for the trip, while a rental car took 5.20 hours, and the train 6.10 hours. But cost was a different story. The train cost only $21.35, including taxis, tips and meals, while the train-riding reporter noted that hassle and fatigue were non-existent. In comparison, the plane cost $40.47 and the rental car $55.78. The biggest criticism voiced by the Turbo rider was the timekeeping, with too much slowing and taking to sidings. Clearly Amtrak needs a first class track to make use of the 125-mph potential of these trains; at present the top speed is held to 79. The rider also was not excited by the prefab meals.

The apricot-colored train interiors are described as "spartan" in comparison with Amtrak-refurbished parlor cars that ran on the route before. The vinyl seats have a seat bottom that slides back and forth in conformance with one's degree of reclining; the seat back does not tilt back, so the person behind does not feel hemmed in. Half the seats face permanently backwards, so passengers in boarding make a mad dash for forward-facing seats. The large windows offer good viewing. In the eating section, pre-packaged food is heated in a microwave oven, as in the days of the SP automat cars. The little 2-sided blue menu card, headed "Les Menus," lists four meal selections, served after 11am: Turbo salads ("from $1.75"), Sandwiches ("from $1.25"), Beef Bourguignon ($2.75), and Southern Fried Chicken ($2.75). There are three breakfast selections, from 30¢ to $1.50 and up.

Timekeeping of the train initially was not good, as mentioned here earlier. Now it is said that engineers are getting the hang of handling the train and getting the feel of its accelerating capacity, and obtaining better performance. One Turbo was out of commission when it struck an auto at Odell Oct. 19, killing the two occupants. Earlier in the week a Turbo was involved in a minor scrape with a truck at Lemont, Illinois. In neither case was there injury to train occupants.



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